

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time [a]

October 19, 2008

Readings

Isaiah 45:1, 4-6

1 Thessalonians 1:1-5b

Matthew 22:15-21

Calendar

October 19: World Mission Sunday

October 24: United Nations Day

Quotes

Sacred Scripture continually speaks to us of an active commitment to our neighbor and demands of us a shared responsibility for all of humanity. This duty is not limited to one's own family, nation or state, but extends progressively to all . . . so no one can consider himself or herself extraneous or indifferent to the lot of another member of the human family.

John Paul II, Centesimus Annus, 51

In the Catholic tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue; participation in the political process is a moral obligation. . . . all Catholics are called to a common commitment to protect human life and stand with those who are poor and vulnerable.

Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility

Church has the right, indeed the duty, to proclaim justice on the social, national and international level, and to denounce instances of injustice, when the fundamental rights of people and their very salvation demand it.

Justice in the World, 36

Founded to build the kingdom of heaven on earth rather than to acquire temporal power, the Church openly avows that the two powers—Church and State—are distinct from one another; that each is supreme in its own sphere of competency. But since the Church does dwell among people, she has the duty "of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel." Sharing the noblest aspirations of people and suffering when she sees these aspirations not satisfied, she wishes to help them attain their full realization. So she offers her distinctive contribution: a global perspective on people and human realities.

Paul VI, Populorum Progressio

Thoughts for your consideration

The scriptures today remind us that God and the spirit of God ultimately transcend all other things. From the perspective of faith, Isaiah is not afraid of saying that even the great Persian king Cyrus is really an instrument of God. Jesus affirms that Caesar is not absolute. Some things belong to the state and some things belong to God. No government is absolute.

The Pharisees and Herodians try to engage Jesus in some sort of political game - much like the political games that are played out today in political discourse and in the media. Jesus refuses to play. He keeps his perspective much broader.

In a certain sense, no follower of Christ can pledge allegiance to the state in any absolute way. The state has its essential role – but it is not absolute. Our ultimate allegiance is to God and not to a flag or a group or a government. At the same time, civil society and government have their important roles to play and Christians are to be involved and creative.

As our economy deals with a “credit crisis,” we recall our commitment to place people before the market. As we deal with the financial problems in the wealth nations of the world, we continue our commitment to seek policies that support the common good of all. As we deal with the problems of the financial markets, we don’t want to forget the people of the less developed world who have been living in poverty and oppressed by debt. As war continues in Iraq and Afghanistan, we bring our Christian critique of war as we invite our society to live in the nonviolent spirit of Jesus. As we continue to observe human rights violations in various places in the world, we speak up in opposition. As we become more and more aware of the power of global organizations, like the IMF or World Bank or WTO, we speak up for those who are left out and have no power. As we see so much power in global corporations, we hear again the call of Jesus not to forget the things of God – a God who calls for liberation and justice for all.

Questions for Reflection in your Faith Sharing Group

When have you experienced government as supportive of your Christian values?

When have you experienced government as in conflict with your values?

When have you spoken out to challenge the values and practices of government or society?

Actions - Links

GLOBAL POVERTY The **Stand up and Take Action against Global Poverty Days** are October 17th -19th. This is an effort of the Jubilee USA Network <http://www.jubileeusa.org> and others around the world to demand that world leaders keep their promises to end poverty and inequality. <http://www.standagainstpoverity.org/>

HUMAN RIGHTS Cyrus, the king in the first reading, was considered an early champion of human rights. In about 1879 archeologists discovered the "Cyrus the Great's Cylinder." In 1971 the United Nations translated and published the Cyrus Cylinder as the first declaration of human rights into all official U.N. languages. For more info, go to: http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/History/hakhamaneshian/Cyrus-the-great/cyrus_cylinder.htm or http://www.iranchamber.com/history/cyrus/cyrus_charter.php .

FINANCIAL CRISIS A Center of Concern report, Causes and Consequences of the Wall Street Crisis, can be found at <http://www.coc.org/system/files/WallStreetBkg08.pdf> US Catholic Bishops have issued a statement on the financial crisis which can be found at: <http://www.usccb.org/comm/archives/2008/08-140.shtml>

"Crazy Facts"

The Jubilee USA Network reports: "After receiving debt relief, the Tanzanian government was able to waive fees for primary school, putting nearly 2 million children back in school overnight. Debt relief has enabled Burundi to build 1100 primary school classrooms and Nicaragua to invest an additional \$54 million in health care and \$121 million in education in the past year alone." They go on to report: "The expanded debt cancellation called for in the Jubilee Act would cost just \$100 million a year, a tiny fraction (.000001%!) of the \$700 billion now approved to be spent bailing out Wall Street."

Prayers of Intercession

Response: Lord, guide us on the road to justice and peace.

For the billions of people in our world who are poor, we pray.....

For the many less-developed nations of the world who are burdened by debt, we pray....

For all the people who are homeless or in danger of losing their homes, we pray.....

For the millions of people who are refugees without even a nation to call home, we pray....

For the countless people who are excluded because of their ethnic or racial heritage, we pray....

For our political leaders called to lead us through all the difficulties, we pray....

For wisdom and integrity as the United States moves toward the upcoming election, we pray....

Prayer

God, we pray that your spirit may rule over all things.

May your spirit rule over kings and presidents
Over prime ministers and generals
Over CEOs and party bosses
Over the legislature and over the bureaucrats
Over all citizens.

May your spirit guide us on the way of peace
On the way of honest dialogue
On the way of reconciliation between peoples
On the way of disarmament and justice
On the way of freedom and life for all.

May your spirit lead us on the journey of blessings shared with all
On the journey of educational opportunity for all our children
On the adventure of research and study that helps all men and women
On the road to meaningful work for all your people
On the path of solidarity and love between all our brothers and sisters.

May your spirit help us
To speak up with courage
To share what we have and what we are
To challenge the powers that be
To offer a message of liberation and life.